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New Subways (pp. 236-237)

The major cause of change in The Bronx following World War I was the completion of the new subway lines. The first came up Manhattan’s Lexington Avenue and crossed beneath the Harlem River into The Bronx in a tunnel under Mott Avenue (now the Grand Concourse). At 149th Street, some trains connected with the original Bronx subway line, but others swung over onto a new line to River Avenue where they emerged from the ground and continued along an elevated structure. They proceeded northward along River Avenue, then along Jerome Avenue, terminating at Woodlawn Road (today’s Bainbridge Avenue) at the entrance to Woodlawn Cemetery. North of 162nd Street, the Sixth and Ninth Avenue Elevated line merged with the new tracks. This new Woodlawn-Jerome line of the Lexington Avenue subway opened on July 17, 1918.

At the same time, the original Bronx subway line was extended further northward. A branch of this elevated subway structure was built north of the West Farm Square station then turned east to provide a transfer with the 180th Street station of the New York, Westchester, and Boston Railway. The tracks then veered in a northerly direction following White Plains Road to 241st Street, within a short walk of the city line. At the same time, the Third Avenue Elevated was extended northward above Webster Avenue from the Botanical Garden to Gun Hill Road, and turned eastward there to cross the Bronx River to White Plains Road to connect with the elevated extension of the original subway line. This subway extension opened as the White Plains Road line on December 13, 1920.

Eight days later, the first subway line to serve the easternmost portion of The Bronx, the Pelham Bay line, opened. It branched off from the Lexington Avenue line soon after it crossed under the Harlem River, turning eastward under 138th Street. At Southern Boulevard, it turned northward, emerging from the ground onto an elevated structure north of Hunts Point Avenue. It made a sharp turn and traveled over the Bronx River and above Westchester Avenue through the center of the old town of Westchester, terminating at Pelham Bay Park.

The purpose of these new lines was to provide access for the people huddled in crowded Manhattan tenement districts to the more open and healthier spaces of The Bronx and the other boroughs to ease congestion on the island and to give them the ability to commute to their jobs. The plan succeeded admirably. In the process, just as with the New York and Harlem River Railroad, the Third Avenue Elevated, and the original subway line, it served as a catalyst for the rapid development in the areas of The Bronx they served.